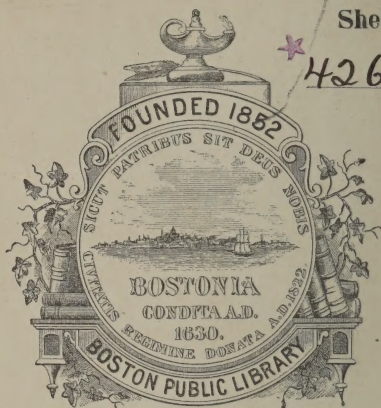




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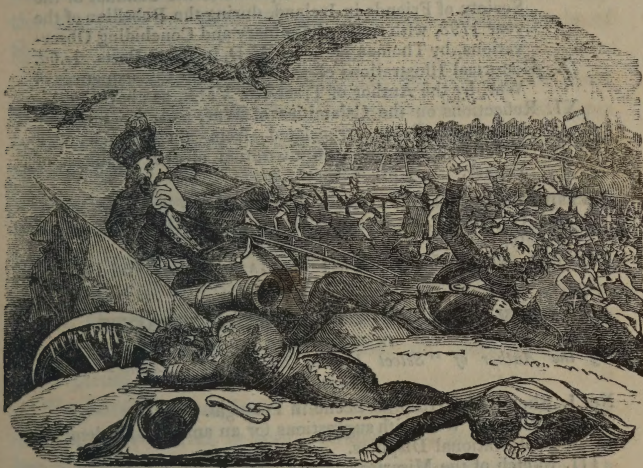
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THE
SIGHTS WE HAVE SEEN.

Wendell Phillips
July 22, 1852
BY THE

AUTHOR OF "SELECT FEMALE BIOGRAPHY,

Comprising Memoirs of Pious British Ladies," "Annals of my Village,"
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LONDON:

Printed by R. Clay, Bread-Street-Hill, Cheapside:

AND SOLD BY

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THE SIGHTS WE HAVE SEEN.

WE have also witnessed some extraordinary sights since the year 1811, perhaps, almost as extraordinary, though not so varied, as those of M. Dufens.

We have seen Napoleon firmly seated on the throne of France, in absolute possession of its extensive empire, with the kingdoms of Italy, Illyria, and the northern parts of Spain.

We have seen him high and lifted up, holding his court at Dresden, previous to the Russian expedition, and summoning his tributary, dependant, and conquered sovereigns around him.

We have heard this modern Tamerlane proudly declaring that he was terrible as the fire of heaven. We have seen him, in conformity with this opinion, enter the Russian territories with an army, consisting, on a moderate computation, of 460,000 men, cavalry and infantry, collected from twenty different kingdoms or nations, and accompanied by 1200 pieces of artillery.

We have contemplated the victorious army, fierce as evening wolves, rich in spoil, strangers to defeat, marching haughtily to the sound of martial music, and impressing with terror and astonishment, the unhappy residue of a vanquished population. We have traced their rapid progress; and beheld with horror the frightful battle of Borodino, in which the fire of 2,000 pieces of artillery mowed down whole battalions, and strewed a surface of nine square miles with mangled wretches, and the wreck of arms, lances, guns, and helmets.

We have seen a grand military entertainment, given at Paris, in honour of these *glorious victories*; when the empress, attended by a crowd of courtiers, and an immense concourse of spectators, bowed down their heads before the "god of armies," and proudly exulted, that the barbarians of the north were for ever precluded from inundating the fertile plains of France.

We have seen the remorseless victors entering the solitary and deserted streets of Moscow, while a thick dark column of smoke, silently and solemnly ascending from the centre of the city, awfully announced that a terrible necessity had impelled the unfortunate Russians to ruin their ancient capital.

We have beheld twenty nations, different in language and in manners, thinking themselves at liberty to commit every species of crime; and inflicting the most atrocious cruelties on individuals of every age and station. We have seen the deep shades of night extending over the devoted city—a night almost unparalleled in the annals of human misery. Tremendous sheets of flame bursting forth in all directions, and seeming to reach the sky; while the uproar of contending voices, the crash of buildings, the piercing cries of unhappy sufferers, and the frightful howling of dogs, which, chained to the gates of palaces, were unable to escape the flames, added ten-fold horror to the scene. Soldiers, visible in all directions, rushing with more than human fury into the midst of fire and smoke, wading in blood, trampling on the bodies of the dead; streets, houses, and cellars, deluged with a crimson tide, and filled with carnage and desolation.

We have seen crowds of miserable people, carrying off their infirm parents, with all that they had rescued from their burning houses. Men, and even women, harnessed to the carts which contained the wreck of their property, and the dearest object of their affections.

We have seen the enemy in their calamitous retreat, drinking the cup of unmingled gall; and marking their course

with unrestrained cruelty and vindictive rage, burning the towns and villages through which they passed; equally regardless of the sufferings of the inhabitants, or the wants of their countrymen who were thus wantonly deprived of shelter.

We have witnessed the most frightful scenes of desolation—fields trampled by thousands of horses, and appearing never to have been cultivated—extensive forests thinned by the long residence of troops, and multitudes of unburied corpses, scarcely retaining the human form, intermingled with garments dyed in blood.

We have seen three thousand prisoners, dragged from their native country, herded together like wild beasts, unsupplied with provisions, lying on the bare ice, expiring with cold, and seizing with avidity the horse flesh which was distributed among them.

We have witnessed a clear and brilliant atmosphere suddenly covered with cold dark vapours; the sun, concealed by thick clouds, disappearing from the sight; and the snow falling in large flakes, involving every object in obscurity. We have seen the soldiers, overwhelmed with sleety whirlwinds, dying from exhaustion, and struggling hard with the agonies of death, rapidly disappearing under snowy heaps, which, as far as the eye could reach, resembled the undulations of a grave-yard; while large flocks of ravens, croaking ominously as they flew over the heads of the brigades, and troops of dogs, howling frightfully around them, seemed impatient to hasten the moment when the poor unfortunate creatures would become their prey.

We have witnessed the passage of the Beresina, unparalleled in horror; an innumerable multitude, artillery, baggage, cavalry, and infantry, rushing to the bridge, eagerly endeavouring to pass first, The strong throwing the weak into the river, trampling under foot the sick and wounded; hundreds crushed under the wheels of the artillery; thousands and thousands throwing themselves into the river,

where they were frozen to death, or perished in convulsions of grief and despair. The division of Gerard scaling mountains of corpses, gaining the opposite shore, setting fire to the bridge, regardless of the fate of their comrades who were left behind, still pressing on their way, exposed to all the horrors that imagination can conceive, accompanied by the frightful howling of the wind, and overwhelmed with tempests ; as if the Eternal himself had let loose the elements, to afflict all nature, and to punish the crimes of man.

We have seen the roads covered with soldiers who scarcely retained the human form, living spectres maddened by an excess of suffering, wildly laughing amid severest woe.

" So withered and so wild in their attire,
They look'd not like inhabitants of earth,
And yet were on it."

We have seen the Russian army, which, in the commencement of the pursuit, had amounted to 120,000 effective men, under Kutusow, unable to muster 35,000 on the frontiers of the Duchy of Warsaw.

We have witnessed in the hospitals of Wilna, 17,000 dead and dying, frozen and freezing ; the former dragged away in sledges to be burned, exhibiting the most extraordinary attitudes ; their eyes, retaining the last expression of anger, pain, or entreaty, and their bodies frightfully distorted.

We have still followed the route of the broken army of Napoleon, and seen them gradually reduced to a miserable remnant of scarcely 20,000 men. Such was the termination of this memorable campaign, in which, on a moderate computation, 500,000 lives were sacrificed (or lost) in 173 days.*

We have seen a solitary sledge, that carried Napoleon and his fortunes, rapidly speeding on its way to Paris.

We have seen him organizing a new army and taking the command, defeated by General Blucher, abdicating the throne of France, Louis XVIII. ascending it ; the allied sovereigns of Prussia and Russia in London ; universal peace, June 6, 1814.

* Narratives of Labaume and Porter.

We have seen the scourge of Europe, tired of the solitude of Elba, landing at Frejus, and rekindling the torch of war; the Bourbons flying from France; Napoleon re-entering it; the dreadful battle of Waterloo; Paris capitulating to Wellington and Blucher; Russians, Prussians, English, Austrians, and Saxons, encamping on the spot where the Parisians, in the pride of victory, had proudly declared, that the barbarians of the North were for ever precluded from inundating the fertile plains of France.

We have seen the Bourbons returning, Napoleon abdicating, endeavouring to escape to America, forced to surrender to Captain Maitland, and resting like an angry meteor on the barren rocks of St. Helena.

Such are the terrific scenes that have been witnessed in Europe, since the year 1811. I call them the "Sights which we have seen," because they have occurred within comparatively a short time.

But this is not all. We have seen in countries that escaped the actual ravages of war, its melancholy and baneful consequences; the increase of taxes, the decline of commerce, broken hearts, and broken fortunes; families sinking from situations of affluence and comfort, daily narrowing their little circle of enjoyments, or seeking, in foreign countries, that support which they could not obtain at home. We have seen them—

"Poor hapless exiles, every pleasure past
Hang round their bowers, and fondly look their last;
And take a long farewell, and wish in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main,
And shuddering still to face the distant deep,
Return and weep, and still return and weep."

Reader, pause, and reflect upon this strange eventful history. Contemplate the disastrous and unsettled state of Europe; and consider what its present situation might have been, if those who suggested war, and those who readily promoted it, had implicitly obeyed the blessed precept which exhorts all men to "*love as brethren*,"

1 Peter iii. 8. Thousands who died miserably, would then have lived in tranquillity; cities that were sacked and burned, would have remained in prosperity; villages from which every living thing was scared, would have continued in peace; fields and pasture-lands that were trodden down, and converted into hideous deserts, would have stood thick with corn, and been covered with flocks and herds!

We know that war is utterly at variance with the positive injunctions of the Gospel; it is equally opposed to sound policy. Why should not the disputes of nations be settled by arbitration, as well as those of individuals? England and America referred some points, respecting which they could not decide, to the Emperor Alexander; and the whole were amicably adjusted.

This is a curious fact. Let us give it a few moments consideration.

A dispute between two great nations is *amicably adjusted* on being *referred to arbitration*; not a gun was FIRED, not a life was LOST, not a merchant was RUINED.

A dispute between the same nations in 1775, *not being referred to arbitration*, occasioned a cruel war which lasted eight years. Three great battles were fought, and England lost thirteen North American provinces, with Minorca, Tobago, and the Floridas. *Thirty-two millions* were raised by taxes, and *one hundred and four millions* by loans; the poor-rates increased *three quarters of a million*; and wheat rose from *thirty-nine shillings and threepence* per quarter, to *forty-eight shillings and sixpence*.*

Such are the different results of war, or arbitration. The advocates of the first will do well to give them a serious consideration.

Subscriptions for the Peace Society, are received at its Depository, Star Court, Bread Street, Cheapside.

* Vide The Herald of Peace, No. 38, Vol. viii. p. 105.

